

A cleaning goof by Uncle Sam creates rare bill

By Roger Boye

A bank teller in Virginia Beach, Va., has discovered an exceedingly rare \$5 bill that also bears the design of a \$1 Federal Reserve note.

The misprint variety is so unusual that currency catalogues don't even list it. Faint green ink from the reverse side of a \$1 bill is visible on the front side of the otherwise normally printed \$5 bill.

The owner mailed her keepsake to hobby newspaper Coin World, which sent it to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in Washington for study. Experts there declared the bill of series 1981 to be genuine, apparently the first such error note authenticated by Uncle Sam.

Government workers created the oddity when they failed to clean a cylinder on the printing press after a run of \$1 bills, officials told Coin World. Later, when the presses began to roll with plates for \$5 bills attached, ink from the uncleaned cylinder transferred to what became the \$5 bill.

Several specialists surveyed by Coin World said they had never seen such an item.

● Price updates: The hot market continues for old U.S. gold coins, especially St.-Gaudens \$20 pieces minted earlier in this century.

A common-date St.-Gaudens in "typical uncirculated condition" retails for as much as \$1,000, up from \$900 just one month ago. With gold selling for nearly \$400 an ounce, the latest coin price represents a record 150 percent premium over the "melt value" of a 1-ounce St.-Gaudens.

Meanwhile, a Philadelphia dealer is offering to pay \$150 each for uncirculated 1983 Lincoln cents with the so-called "double-die reverses." That penny—the hobby's latest error coin—sports double lettering on the tails side due to a mistake in the die-making process.

In an advertisement, dealer Harry J. Forman also says he'll pay \$85 for a specimen showing traces of wear from circulation. He often is the first dealer to advertise a coin or currency error, and his "buy prices" tend to represent hobby norms.

The coin's "retail price" is even more, of course. For example, a Florida dealer recently sold a "typical uncirculated" doubled-die for \$450 and an "about uncirculated" piece for \$350, said hobby expert Alan Herbert.

The market hasn't been so kind to unplated zinc cents. Dealers who sold the oddities for \$125 each last fall now are getting from \$50 to \$75 per item, Herbert said.

The price is depressed because more unplated coins have accidentally entered circulation in recent weeks. Uncle Sam first made zinc cents coated with a thin layer of copper in 1982.